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ART. V.—*The Lamentations of the Natives of Ceylon over the Bodies of their Deceased Relatives, communicated by Lieut.-Colonel WILLIAM COLBROOKE, M.R.A.S. &c. &c.*

WHETHER the feelings which these lamentations express have existence in all cases in the hearts of the mourners, or otherwise, is not at present the consideration. The observance implies that such feelings are held in high estimation; and the striking resemblance which these lamentations bear to those in Scripture, and in particular to that over Saul, appealing to the common sympathies which the occasion naturally calls forth, and uttered in short, emphatic, and unconnected sentences, renders them not the less worthy of observation.

Immediately after the death of a person the people of the house begin to weep aloud and to embrace each other; and the female relations, friends, and neighbours coming in, sit down about the body, and, putting their arms around each others' necks, raise up the most bitter cry of lamentation, their long hair falling dishevelled, their breasts uncovered, which they continue to beat, and at the same time to enumerate the excellences of the deceased, exclaiming — “ Ah, he has left us! he has fallen! he is gone!” and drawing various comparisons descriptive of the beauty of his person.

THE WIFE'S LAMENTATION OVER HER HUSBAND.

“ Ah, how many years have we been married and lived together! Never were we separated till now, oh, my husband! Shall I make an offering to God (Brahm) for what is done this day? Because thou art dead thine enemies will now rejoice. I also will come with thee! I saw thee die, and yet I am still alive! Have the gods summoned you? Are you in heaven (Siva's mountain)? When shall I again see thee and the light of thy countenance? When shall I recognise thy gait? When I am ill, who will attend me and obtain skilful aid? When my children cry, to whom shall I make any appeal for them? When they are hungry, to whom will they say, ‘ Father?’ My children, you must not forget the word ‘ Father!’ Oh, my friend! by whom shall my children be now supported? When will my father again say to you, ‘ Son-in-law?’ Do the eyes which saw the joy of my bridal-day witness this death-scene? How can I look on that face, which was once so beautiful, and is now so faded and withered? The people will now point to me, and say, ‘ The widow!’¹ Who will now look in my face?”²

¹ Referring, perhaps, to the Hindú notion, that a widow should ascend the pile with her husband, though this practice does not prevail in Ceylon.

² This alludes to the custom of a husband, who, before he goes on a journey, or

The husband makes use of many of the same forms of speech over the body of a deceased wife.

A DAUGHTER'S LAMENTATION OVER HER FATHER.

"From you I derived existence, and when an infant you supported me in your arms, and kept me from falling. Without me you would not eat. With milk and rice you nourished me. To relieve my sorrow you decked me with ornaments. Oh, my father! do I look upon your withered face? Did you not give me in marriage? To whom will my husband now say, 'Father-in-law?' Under whose protection shall we now live, and to whom will my children say, 'Grandfather?' You have left us, my father!"

A SON'S LAMENTATION OVER HIS FATHER.

"From infancy to manhood you nourished me. You endeavoured to give me learning: you gave me in marriage. If I was ill you would not eat. Ah, my father! when shall I again see your smiling face? The people will now say, 'Wretched man, he has lost his father!' You taught me to plough and to prepare the lands; to sow and to reap. I thought you would have partaken of the fruit of the trees I had planted—that you would have partaken of the Palmyra fruit! Oh, my father!"

THE FATHER'S LAMENTATION OVER HIS SON.

"Ah! when I die, who will perform the funeral rites for me? Oh! my child, my own flesh, my strength and support!¹ I believed you would see my death, not I thine! Who was dearer to thy mother? To whom will she now say, 'My son?' That you should have been with us thus long, and have left us in our old age! To whom will your betrothed say, 'Husband?' My son! When we are gone this house will become a refuge for bats! My son! My son!"

To die unlamented is accounted a great disaster; and it is a common saying with them, "When I die, pay me the due honours."

commences any important business, calls his wife, looks steadfastly in her face, saying, "Ah! ah!" and then makes sure of success. He will also look in the face of a beloved child with a similar object.

¹ Literally, "My lion."